

PRESENTATION AT CAL-FED PUBLIC LISTENING SESSION
MAYO P. RYAN
SEPTEMBER 22, 1999
SACRAMENTO

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My name is Mayo Ryan and I am a fourth generation family farmer on the Westside of Fresno County. I am alarmed that Cal-Fed's stated purpose of a balanced water solution is being ignored, and can testify first hand that further cuts in agriculture's supply of irrigation water – for any reason - could mean disaster for me and for many of the farmers in our area.

Despite several years wet years – and even flooding at times – we have received less than our full allocation of water in 7 of the past 9 years. Environmental restrictions on pumping water south of the Delta are the main cause of this. We have given up a sizeable amount of our allocation to the Central Valley Project Improvement Act, and we continue to be severely impacted by the Endangered Species Act, most recently when the Delta's export pumps were shut down due to delayed smelt migration patterns. Critical storage was lost for next year's allocation due to this one instance alone.

We have learned to live with reduced allocations – in wet years – by adopting most of the easy water conservation measures. We're pumping from wells already overdrafted, and have altered crop patterns to make the best of what little water we have. All that's left are difficult and expensive measures, which aren't economically feasible.

My worry is: What are we going to do in dry years? What are we going to do when the population is 20 million greater? Cal Fed must plan for these events by implementing new water supplies and increased storage, while at the same time protecting existing water rights and allocations.

New water storage is essential for all interests in California – for maintaining the current allocation to agriculture, for meeting the needs of a population boom, and for preserving the fragile Delta environment. Anything less is not a balanced solution.

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Rather than developing these new water supplies and increased storage, the draft proposes to generate water through conservation, reallocation and water transfers. It appears that agriculture is the group giving up water to meet these demands. Simply, the farmer cannot bear the full burden of Cal Fed's conservation and reallocation plans.

Cal Fed's plan to rearrange water supplies to meet both current and future needs is not a solution, only a short-term patch. Increased water supplies and storage must be critical components of the draft and I urge the panel to consider changes that mandate both.

Like me, the farmers in our area are some of the most concerned environmentalists around. Our livelihood depends upon a reliable water supply, which we put to its most conservative and efficient use. And in terms of our farmland, we conserve and maintain a non-renewable resource – and have been doing so for decades.

The future of our family farm – and the many farmworkers, businesses and local farm economies that rely upon us - are all on the line, based on the decisions implemented by the Cal-Fed process and how those decisions impact our farm's supply of water.

Please recognize that agricultural resources are part of the existing environment, and that any adverse impacts to agricultural resources as a result of Cal-Fed must be mitigated. Protection of existing water rights and new and timely water storage are critical in any balanced solution under the Cal Fed process.

Thank you.

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